

Information: Hanging Gardens of Babylon

Did They Exist?

The Hanging Gardens were one of Babylon's most impressive sites, according to Greek historians. Yet mysteries of how they were built and kept up remain.

They were one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, yet no one knows for sure whether they existed. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were a wonder to look at, according to anyone who saw them and wrote about them. Greek writers were certainly impressed by them. Yet where were they, and why were they built?

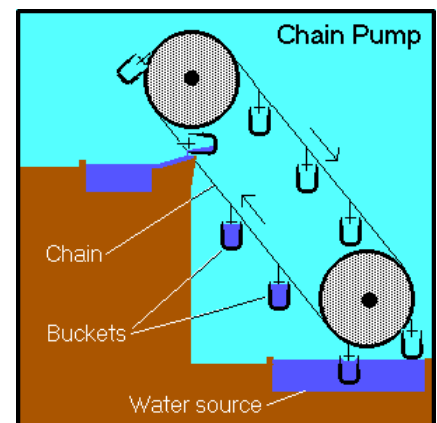


Historians are fairly certain that they know the answer to the first question: Where were they? Recent excavations of the ancient city of Babylon have revealed a likely theory that the Gardens weren't really hanging but were on high rooftops, giving the illusion of hanging. It has been suggested that the plants that filled the rooftop garden had vines so long that they covered the building walls, giving the impression that the plants "hung" in midair. In fact, the name comes from a mistranslation of the Greek word *kremastos* or the Latin word *pensilis*, which mean not just "hanging", but "overhanging" as in the case of a terrace or balcony.

One of the more common mysteries has been how the plants were given water. Babylon, after all, is in the middle of a desert. Excavations in recent years have shed light on this question. Archaeologists now think that a sort of pump system was designed, utilizing buckets of water on a sort of pulley (like our modern conveyor belt). No such object has been found, of course, but the evidence that has been found fits in with this theory. "The approach to the Garden sloped like a hillside and the several parts of the structure rose from one another tier on tier... On all this, the earth had been piled... and was thickly planted with trees of every kind that, by their great size and other charm, gave pleasure to the beholder... The water machines [raised] the water in great abundance from the river, although no one outside could see it."

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Another question in relation to the one above is how the foundation of the Gardens was kept intact. The building was made of brick, and the water needed to keep the plants alive must have had to have flown down a sort of drain in order not to soften the brick and make the whole roof collapse. Further, the Gardens were said to have been on several levels of terraces. Surely a drain would have had to have been in place for each terrace level. Archaeologists are still working on this one.



The other big mystery is who had the gardens built. Babylon wasn't exactly a democracy, so we can probably surmise that slaves or laborers built the gardens. But who had them built?

The story traditionally has been that King Nebuchadnezzar II had them built for his Median wife, Amytis, because she missed the gardens of her home. No firsthand accounts of motives for building the Gardens exist, of course, so we are left to assume.

We can probably conclude that the Hanging Gardens existed, based on the theory that enough people saw them and described them. We can probably conclude that the system of providing water to all those plants was remarkable and ingenious, especially given the desert climate and the mechanical capabilities of the ancient Babylonians. We can definitely say that the Hanging Gardens continue to inspire the imagination.

Also look at:

<http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/worldhistory/hanginggardens2.htm>

<http://7wonders.mrdonn.org/gardens.html>

**Wide
Game:**

Scavenger Hunt

RULES:

- 1 You get one point for each item found.
- 2 Each item may only be counted once.
- 3 Points are lost for picking leaves and flowers off trees and shrubs.
- 4 At the end of the game, return all live creatures to where you found them.
- 5 One point is lost for each minute you are late.

You have 10 minutes to find the following:

- 1 A thorn
- 2 Something red
- 3 A four leaved clover
- 4 Something that reminds you of yourself
- 5 Something round
- 6 Something sharp
- 7 Something perfectly straight
- 8 A bone
- 9 A feather
- 10 A camouflaged animal or insect
- 11 Three different kinds of seed pods
- 12 A piece of man-made litter
- 13 Something that makes a noise
- 14 The smallest leaf
- 15 Something important to nature
- 16 Something soft
- 17 A seed carried by the wind
- 18 Something beautiful
- 19 Four different shaped leaves
- 20 A big smile

Activity: Pooter

A pooter is a vital piece of equipment for any Entomologist. You can use it to collect tiny insects when you're out in the field.



Links:

<http://www.amentsoc.org/bug-club/fun/experiment-pooter.html>

<http://www.discoverwildlife.com/british-wildlife/your-garden/how-make-pooter>

http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/images/activity_sheets/pooter_activity_sheet.pdf



How to make a pooter






What you need:

- plasticine 
- jar with lid 
- 40cm of clear, flexible plastic tubing, 7-10cm wide (try a big DIY store) 
- a small piece of gauze, net curtains or tights 
- elastic band 
- green and red stickers or tape 

- 1** Make 2 holes in the lid (ask an adult to help with this) 
- 2** Cut 2 lengths of tubing about 15cm and 25cm long and poke them through the holes. 
- 3** Put the gauze over the end of the shorter tube and mark the other end with a green sticker/tape. 

- 4** Mark the longer tube with a red sticker/tape (red means 'don't suck this tube'). 
- 5** Put some plasticine around the tube holes to make them airtight. 

Now you're ready to pooter!



www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

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